Washington State Patrol
Media Release

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State Officials Join to Educate Children and Parents on Internet Safety

Today in Tumwater, state officials gathered to unveil a new brochure on Internet safety and to discuss the increasing concern that our youngsters are becoming more vulnerable to sexual predators on the Internet. WSP Chief John Batiste, Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson, State Senator Rosemary McAuliffe, and Department of Information Systems Director Gary Robinson discussed their concerns with a group of teens at Bush Middle School.

"With the rising popularity of e-mail and Internet chat rooms, it's become easier than ever before to talk to strangers -- and the results can be frightening," said Sen. Rosemary McAuliffe, D-Bothell. "I wanted to produce something that gives teens and parents good ideas about how to stay safe online. I hope every teen in Washington sees this pamphlet and shares it with his or her family."

 "Now that the holiday break is coming and you have more time on your hands, I suspect you will spend more time surfing the net on your home computer," Chief Batiste told the teens. "When you were younger we told you about stranger danger. Now, this is a different type of danger and I want you to be even more careful. This danger comes from what you do on your computer," he said. Chief Batiste went on to say that 65% of the time the youth met the person who sexually solicited them in a chat room.

According to a Youth Internet Safety Survey, 14-17 year olds were the most likely to receive sexual solicitations online (77%). Teenagers are the most vulnerable to be solicited and exploited on-line. They are also at-risk of identity theft and increasing risk for computer viruses.

"Many teens play online games, visit chat rooms or create their own Web pages, and sometimes they share personal information about themselves and their families," said Gary Robinson, director of the Washington State Department of Information Services. "Posting personal information makes even our children vulnerable to identity theft, the fastest growing crime in the nation. Parents can help avoid these problems by spending time with their children, talking about how to use the Internet."

"The Internet has had a tremendous impact in our lives. But as it continues to evolve, both kids and adults must keep learning new ways to protect themselves from online predators," said Terry Bergeson. "While it is a wonderful resource, it can present potential dangers and we hope by providing these resources that we can protect and empower both parents and teenagers to take the necessary precautions to be safe."

To view this pamphlet, please visit the following URL: http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/pubdocs/InternetSafety.pdf

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